

Procedure 12.230 - Fatal Crash Investigation and Placement of Related Charges
 Procedure 12.616 - Notifications: Deceased Persons and Police Action Resulting
 in Life Threatening Injuries/Death
 Procedure 12.705 - Property Confiscation
 Procedure 12.715 - Property and Evidence: Accountability, Processing, Storage
 and Release
 Ohio Revised Code 313.12 – Notice to Coroner of Violent, Suspicious, Unusual
 or Sudden Death or any Death of a Mentally
 Retarded or Developmentally Disabled Person
 Ohio Revised Code 313.13(A) - Autopsy
 Hamilton County Coroner's Office Manual: General Office Policies and
 Procedures, Sections 2.4 & 2.18.0
 Cincinnati Police Department Investigations Manual

Mentally Retarded Person – A person having significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficiencies in adaptive behavior, manifested during the developmental period.

Developmental Disability - A severe and chronic disability characterized by all of the following:

1. It is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental and physical impairments, other than a mental or physical impairment solely caused by mental illness as defined in division (A) of section 5122.01 of the Revised Code.
2. It is manifested before age twenty-two.
3. It is likely to continue indefinitely.
4. It results in one of the following:
 - a. In the case of a person under three years of age, at least one developmental delay or established risk;
 - b. In the case of a person at least three years of age but under six years of age, at least two developmental delays or an established risk;
 - c. In the case of a person six years of age or older, a substantial functional limitation in at least three of the following areas of major life activity, as appropriate for the person's age: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and, if the person is at least sixteen years of age, capacity for economic self-sufficiency.

5. It causes the person to need a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or other type of care, treatment, or provision of services for an extended period of time that is individually planned and coordinated for the person.

Purpose:

To ensure the timely and efficient investigation of incidents involving deceased persons, while preserving potential evidence of a crime by securing the site pending the release of the body by the Hamilton County Coroner.

To protect the dignity of persons who have died and to lessen the effects of the death on members of the decedent's family.

To ensure the timely transfer of information between the Police Department and the Hamilton County Coroner's Office.

Ensure proper handling of evidence in cases involving deceased persons.

Policy:

Officers will exhaust all reasonable means to determine whether a person is deceased. It is better to make the mistake of sending someone to the hospital who is already dead than for a person to die as a result of a wrong assumption.

A supervisor must respond to the scene of all deceased persons.

The Hamilton County Coroner or Coroner's investigator will respond on all deceased persons that are determined to be Coroner's cases. They will make the determination as to whether the case is considered a Coroner's case or not. No officer will touch or move the body unless advised by the Coroner or his investigator; this includes removing identification.

Information:

A Hamilton County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) prisoner detail will transport all decomposed bodies.

The Police Department is required by law to report all deaths of mentally retarded and/or developmentally disabled individuals to the Coroner's Office regardless of the circumstances.

Procedure:

A. Investigation of Non-Suspicious or Natural Deaths

1. Officer's Responsibilities:

- a. Upon the discovery of a deceased person, use all reasonable means to determine whether the person is dead:
 - 1) Inspect the body for any signs of life. Check for airway obstructions, breathing, and pulse.

- 2) If unable to determine after using all reasonable means, request the Fire Department respond.
 - b. The on-scene officer will notify a supervisor.
 - c. Secure the scene until the arrival of a supervisor.
 - 1) Do not touch or move the body. This includes removing a wallet, looking for identification or rolling the body to take photographs.
 - 2) Do not move anything or alter the scene. This includes opening windows, changing thermostats or fans, or turning on or off lights.
 - d. The initial investigating officer will complete a Form 316A, Deceased Person Report.
 - 1) If the officer obtains complete information at the scene, the Hamilton County Coroner's Office may be able to authorize release of the body directly to a funeral director.
 - a) Advise the funeral home to contact the reporting district with the death pronouncement information required for the Form 316A.
 - 1] The district will fax the completed Form 316A to the Coroner's Office.
 - e. A physician on the scene may make the official death pronouncement. The officer must still receive instructions from the Hamilton County Coroner's Office regarding disposition of the body.
2. Supervisor's Responsibilities
- a. The district supervisor on the scene will assume command of the initial investigation and immediately contact the Hamilton County Coroner's Office.
 - 1) Notification to the Hamilton County Coroner's Office will be made in all accidental or natural deaths, except natural deaths at nursing homes (see Section F.) and the death of a child who was an in-patient at Children's Hospital (see Section B.2.). These exemptions do not apply to individuals who were mentally retarded or developmentally disabled. The supervisor must notify the Coroner's Office in all cases where the deceased was mentally retarded or developmentally disabled.
 - 2) The Coroner's Office will evaluate the circumstances of the death with the supervisor. The Coroner's Office will determine if the case is a Coroner's case.

- a) If the Coroner's Office sends an investigator and/or forensic pathologist to the scene, the supervisor will remain at the scene and coordinate the investigation with the Coroner's Office.
 - b) If the Coroner's Office does not send an investigator and/or forensic pathologist to the scene, the district supervisor will proceed with the death investigation.
- b. If the Coroner's Office does not respond, photograph the body in the position it was discovered.
 - 1) Unless prevented by scene restrictions, take additional photographs of the right, left, top, and bottom sides of the body, moving the body to photograph, if necessary.
 - 2) Properly label photographs with the date, time, address, and identity of the photographer.
 - a) Attach photographs to the Form 316A.
- c. Make arrangements for next of kin notification in accordance with Procedure 12.616, Notifications: Deceased Persons and Police Action Resulting in Life Threatening Injuries/Death.
 - 1) If the deceased is determined to be indigent, officers will contact the Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati Mortuary Services at 1-800-884-6739. They will respond to transport the body.
 - a) If there is a dispute between the mortuary service and the supervisor as to the financial status of the deceased, contact the Hamilton County Coroner's Office for direction.

B. Investigation of Homicide or Suspicious Deaths

- 1. If there is evidence the death was due to homicide, suicide, suspected suicide, fire, death while in police custody, death involving suspicious circumstances, or the death of a child seven years of age or younger, a supervisor will immediately secure the crime scene and post an officer or officers to restrict entry into the scene.
 - a. A supervisor will assign an officer to complete a Form 390, Crime Scene Admittance Log, documenting the personnel who have entered the scene, the time and date they entered, the reason for entering, and the time and date they exited the scene.
 - 1) No one is to touch or move the body. This includes removing a wallet, looking for identification or rolling the body to take photographs.

- 2) No one is to alter the scene. This includes opening windows, changing the thermostat or fans, or turning on or off lights.
 - b. A district supervisor will contact the Homicide Unit explaining the circumstances requiring their response. The first officer on the scene, the notifying supervisor, and any other officer with pertinent information will remain on the scene. No one will be released except by a Homicide Unit supervisor or ranking Homicide Unit investigator.
 - 1) When the Homicide Unit arrives, the ranking Homicide Unit supervisor or investigator will take command of the investigation.
 - a) Homicide Unit personnel are responsible for completing the Form 301, Cincinnati Police Department Incident Report, for the homicide.
 - b) District personnel on scene are responsible for the completion of any other reports.
 - 1] The investigating officer will complete a Form 316A and fax it to Criminal Investigation Section (CIS).
 - c. Homicide Unit personnel will insure the Coroner's Office was notified for all deaths involving homicide, suicide, suspected suicide, fire, suspicious circumstances, children seven years of age or younger, mentally retarded or developmentally disabled individuals who died as the result of an above listed occurrence; or if the death occurred while in police custody. Homicide Unit personnel will provide the relevant preliminary information regarding the death.
 2. Officers dispatched to Children's Hospital regarding the death of a child will immediately notify the Homicide Unit and request a district supervisor respond.
 - a. Homicide Unit personnel will respond to consult with the attending physician and assume command of the investigation.
 - b. The attending physician at Children's Hospital is responsible for notifying the Coroner's Office prior to requesting an officer respond.
 3. The HCSO will investigate all deaths occurring at the Hamilton County Justice Center, River City Correctional Center, Queensgate Correctional Facility, and the Hamilton County Juvenile Court Youth Center.
- C. Deceased Prisoners
1. Officers will immediately notify a supervisor.

2. The responding supervisor will summon the Homicide Unit and Internal Investigations Section (IIS) when a person, while under or just prior to police control and as a result of police activity, dies or suffers life threatening injuries.
 - a. Homicide Unit and IIS will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of any incident where a person dies while in police custody.
 - b. Police personnel will cooperate fully in the investigation.
3. Notify the District Commander or, if at night, the Night Chief.

D. Crime Scene Protection

1. The first supervisor on the scene will ensure the crime scene is secure.
2. The supervisor on the scene will assign an officer to complete a Form 390 documenting the personnel who have entered the scene, the time and date they entered, the reason for entering, and the time and date they exited the scene.
3. Officers will not touch anything unless absolutely necessary and will not take any photographs. No one will be allowed to enter the scene until the Homicide Unit arrives. Criminalistics Squad will process the scene.
 - a. Weapons may need to be secured for safety reasons, or if the scene will undergo an uncontrollable change such as fire, explosion, flooding, etc.
 - 1) Photograph any weapon(s) before moving. Note the time, location, where it was placed, and the person who moved the weapon.
 - b. Refer to the Investigations Manual for in-depth guidelines.

E. Investigations of Accidental Deaths

1. Some scenes require extra officer safety precautions. Be sure the scene is safe to work in before investigating.
 - a. Notify the Cincinnati Fire Department or Building Department as necessary.
2. Secure any equipment possibly involved in the death, e.g., electrical equipment that may have fallen into a bathtub, a jack believed to be faulty, a space heater emitting toxic gases, etc.
 - a. Submit any evidence for examination according to Procedure 12.715, Property and Evidence: Accountability, Processing, Storage and Release.

F. Natural Deaths at Nursing Homes

1. An officer and a supervisor will respond, if summoned, to the scene to investigate.
 - a. The Coroner's Office does not need to be notified by police, unless the deceased individual was mentally retarded or developmentally disabled.
 - 1) A Form 316A will not be made.
 - b. If the deceased has been the victim of a previous assault or the subject of previous patient abuse, the Coroner's Office and Homicide Unit must be notified.
 - 1) Contact CIS and request a records check.
 - 2) Review the patient's records.
2. Advise the nursing home staff it is their responsibility to notify the next of kin and arrange for disposition of the deceased.
 - a. Deceased persons with no known next-of-kin, who require county burials or storage for other reasons, will be accepted at the Hamilton County morgue.
 - 1) It is the responsibility of the nursing home to arrange transportation to the morgue.

G. Expected Deaths of Terminally Ill Hospice Patients

1. Expected deaths at a residence, rather than in a health care facility, come under the Coroner's jurisdiction.
2. Home health care/hospice nurses are required to report these deaths to the Coroner's Office using their Standard Death Report Form.
 - a. This includes disposing of any remaining medication, securing a pronouncement for the death certificate, ensuring there were no recent falls or unnatural events, and that a funeral home has been contracted to transport the deceased.
3. An on-scene hospice nurse relieves the Police Department of death reporting responsibility in cases of expected deaths of terminally ill hospice patients.
 - a. If needed, an officer and a supervisor will respond to the scene to investigate. If an officer and supervisor respond, the supervisor has the responsibility to ensure the appropriate Coroner's Office notification was made if the death involved a mentally retarded or developmentally disabled individual.
 - 1) A Form 316A will not be made.

4. This does not relieve or preclude an officer on the scene from investigating the circumstances of a death.
- H. Disposition of Property According to Type of Death Report
1. If the deceased lived alone, secure the premises.
 - a. Officers will not do an inventory search.
 2. Direct all inquiries about the premises and personal property to the Coroner's Office. Final disposition of personal effects is the responsibility of the Coroner.
 3. If the deceased lived alone and the body must go to the morgue, secure the premises even if next-of-kin is present. Explain to the next-of-kin that re-entry into the premises requires authorization from the Coroner's Office.
 4. If the Coroner's Office releases the body, the next of kin can make arrangements to have a funeral home respond.
 - a. Police do not need to inventory or secure the property.
 5. In cases of a suspected homicide, Homicide Unit personnel will consult with the Coroner's Office to determine what property will be transported with the body to the Coroner's Office and what property will be processed as evidence according to Procedure 12.715, Property and Evidence: Accountability, Processing, Storage and Release.
 - a. Property going to the morgue with the body, or property held by police, will be documented on the Form 316A in the presence of, and signed by, the Coroner's transport service.
- I. Decomposed Bodies
1. The on-scene supervisor will authorize the request for a prisoner detail for the removal of a decomposed body.
 2. District desk personnel will contact the Hamilton County Coroner's Office to request transport of decomposed bodies.
 - a. The Coroner's Office will notify the HCSO, Corrections Division, to respond to the scene with an inmate detail.
 - 1) The HCSO will provide a transportation vehicle, transportation officer, and a four-man inmate detail. A HCSO supervisor will issue clothing, gloves, and masks to the inmates. Body bags and stretchers are in the transport vehicle. Evidence tape is provided to the transport service by the Coroner's Office.
 - 2) Do not expose detail inmates to any condition that could jeopardize their health or safety.

3. All bodies will be transported in a sealed body bag.
 - a. The body bag will be secured with evidence tape by the transport service in the presence of the releasing officer or other agent.
 - 1) The tape will be initialed by the releasing officer and the transport service.
 - a) The sealed body bag will be opened by the morgue attendant while in the presence of the transport service upon arriving at the morgue, unless otherwise directed by attending pathologist.
 - b) The name of the releasing agent will be noted on the transport's record.
4. Police personnel will retain responsibility for the investigation and required reports. Cases investigated by the Homicide Unit may require special handling.
 - a. The Coroner or Coroner's investigator may give specific directions on transporting and handling the body to preserve evidence or expedite the investigation.
5. Any time property is transported to the morgue with the body, taken to the Coroner's Office, or held by the police, the investigating officer will document all items on the Form 316A, Deceased Person Report.
 - a. The transport service will sign the Form 316A acknowledging receipt of the listed items.